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## HYDRANGEAS NOT BLOOMING

We want to share some information that may help answer a few questions about troublesome hydrangeas. Here are some steps that consumers in cooler northern climates can take to help ensure better bloom production on their hydrangeas.

### PHYSICAL ISSUES

#### LOCATION-

In Northern climates, the location of your hydrangea in the garden will have a large impact on the bloom production. The farther north you are, the more sun your plants need and can tolerate. In zones 4-5A plant your hydrangeas in a location that enables them to receive at least 6 hours of sun with some dappled shade in the afternoon.

#### PRUNING-

**STOP** cutting plants to the ground, most if not all of the flower buds on old wood are being removed. Endless Summer Hydrangeas and many of the other newer re-blooming types certainly do bloom on new wood, but it may take longer for flower buds to develop on the new growth of a young plant. If the plant blooms only on old wood you are certainly trimming off other flower buds for next year. Try instead to trim very carefully in the spring only spent or dead branching or to lightly shape the hydrangea. Once the plant begins to bloom deadhead and trim to maintain the shape.

#### WINTER COVER-

Protection for plants in the first few years is important, as is protection from spring frost or a spring freeze. Since hydrangea buds can emerge early in the spring, late frosts may damage bud development as well as any new growth. Keeping the plants covered with mulch or covering them with a **breathable** material (bed sheet or burlap) when there is a threat of a late frost helps protect the buds and any soft new growth and to ensure they won't burn out in the hot sun. You also need to watch that the material does not stay wet to avoid rotting the plant especially around the base of the plant.

## **INTERNAL ISSUES**

### **FERTILIZING-**

Fertilization is an important factor in flower production of hydrangeas. A good quality, slow release fertilizer applied once in the spring and once in the fall should be sufficient. If you over feed your hydrangeas, the effect is usually dark green leaf production with fewer flower buds. In the North it is recommended not to fertilize after mid-August as plants need to slow down and acclimate for the winter. If you would like to fertilize after August, wait until the plant is dormant and apply fertilizer for an early start in spring.

### **CHANGING FLOWER COLOR-**

The first step is to learn the pH of your soil. Changing flowers from BLUE to PINK you need to change from an acid soil to an alkaline soil. (pH 6.0 to 6.2) Many soils in North America are naturally alkaline already and will produce pink blooms with no extra effort required. Changing flowers from PINK to BLUE or a deeper blue you need to raise the pH of your soil. (pH 5.2-5.5) Using a soil acidifier will lower your pH for beautiful blue flowers.

### **WATERING-**

The amount you water is a factor you can regulate to ensure beautiful blooms. It's normal for plants to wilt for a short time in the heat of the day. You are better off to water well and less often, than giving them a little all of the time. Be sure not to water the foliage in the heat of the day as the sun can burn the plant.